

Institution: Newcastle University
Unit of Assessment: 19
Title of case study: Evaluating regional food policy: Enhancing and embedding policy for the benefit of farming and food
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Based on longstanding research strengths in food policy and marketing, Newcastle University was commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to review and evaluate England's Regional Food Strategy (RFS) and provide recommendations for ministers. The evaluation's recommendations resulted in £2 million of additional public sector investment to the food sector and inclusion within the priorities of the Rural Development Programme for England (2007-2013). The structures introduced as a result of the report were kept in place despite the abolition of the Regional Development Agencies. These structures included 8 Regional Food Groups that provided specialist assistance to businesses and enhanced support by DEFRA for obtaining EU protected status for regionally distinctive foods. In terms of significance, the research influenced an important area of national policy, which has left an enduring legacy for the benefit of farming and rural development. In terms of reach, the impact of the research has extended beyond the EU to the development of local food networks in the Balkans.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The changing nature of food: the emergence of local and regional food markets</p> <p>The significant body of research on regional foods at Newcastle University has its origins in the late 1990s. Led by Dr. Angela Tregear (1995-2005), and Dr. Matthew Gorton (1998-), Newcastle's contribution initially focused on providing a detailed assessment of consumer attitudes toward, and purchasing behaviour regarding, regional and local foods (1). The research segmented consumers, identifying the psychological and socio-economic characteristics of 'concerned consumers' who buy local foods and/or engage in alternative food systems (2). The research was part-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), in the wake of the foot-and-mouth crisis, and the Countryside Agency under their Eat the View programme (Grants 2 and 3). In addition, a development officer was funded to liaise with speciality food businesses in north east England in order to raise the profile of the sector. The research provided a theoretical framework for assessing the appropriateness of DEFRA's Regional Food Strategy.</p> <p>In 2003, as part of a strategic plan for the recovery of the farming and food sector in the wake of the foot-and-mouth crisis, a Regional Food Strategy (RFS) was agreed by DEFRA, Food from Britain (FFB), the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the Countryside Agency. A key objective of the RFS was to enable farmers to add value to their produce and to re-establish connections with food consumers. Gorton and Tregear's analysis of the RFS (Grant 4) found that although the sector was a buoyant and growing component of the rural economy, there was still room for improvement. The study made several recommendations, principally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be government support for Regional Food Groups in each English Region, with additional funding to Food from Britain to help the Groups develop new markets. • There should be better promotion of the opportunity to apply for EU protected designation status for speciality, local foods (Protected Designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication) where geographical indication is used as a signal of quality. • The RDAs should have responsibility for promoting regional brands as part of their regional strategies, including the tourism strategy (3-4). <p>Protected designations of origin</p> <p>In parallel, other research led by Tregear and Gorton investigated protected designations of origin. These limit the rights to using a regional food name (e.g. Parma Ham), to, typically, members of a producers' consortium. The research focused on the implementation of the EU's two main designation schemes (Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)) and was undertaken as part of two EU Framework projects: Dolphins (2000-2003 Grant 1) (5) and SiNERGI (2005-2008 Grant 5). Research evaluated the validity of economic arguments for government intervention to prevent market failure and the role that designations might play in regional development.</p>

Regional and local foods and the future of European small farms

Gorton has subsequently led research on regional and local foods in the context of small farms in the enlarged EU. This has been undertaken as part of three EU framework projects on which he acted as principal investigator: SCARLED (2007-2009 Grant 6), Focus Balkans (2008-2011 Grant 7) and COMPETE (2012-2015 Grant 8). Small farms, while still numerous in many EU member states, lack cost competitiveness and are increasingly marginalised from the ‘formal’ supply chains which are dominated by rapidly expanding multiple grocery retailers. The production of regional and local foods has been promoted under the rural development pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy as a means to improve returns to farmers and stimulate rural development. Gorton’s research evaluated the economic state of small farms, their engagement in short food supply chains and potential for stimulating rural economic development, as well as consumer attitudes to local foods in the Western Balkans (6).

The on-going programme of research on small farms and regional/local foods has included a study on agri-food supply chains for the World Bank (2005), input into a report on the future of small farms for a high-level European Network for Rural Development event (2010) and contributing to a study of semi-subsistence farming for the European Parliament (2013), the latter underlining the importance of local and regional foods to the future of these farms within an expanded EU.

3. References to the research

1. Weatherell, C., Tregear, A., Allinson, J. (2003). ‘In search of the concerned consumer: UK public perceptions of food, farming and buying local’. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19(2), 233-244. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(02\)00083-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00083-9) (ABS List 2010 3*).
2. Tregear, A., Ness, M. (2005). ‘Discriminant analysis of consumer interest in buying locally produced foods’. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 21(1-2), 19-35. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1362/0267257053166811> (ABS List 2010 3*).
3. Elliott J., Temple, M., Bowden, C., Gorton, M., Tregear, A. (2005), ‘Economic Evaluation of the Regional Food Strategy’. Report to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Wolverhampton and Newcastle: ADAS Consulting Ltd. and the University of Newcastle. Available at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/foodfarm/evaluation/regional/ackabri.pdf> (accessed 24/09/13).
4. Gorton, M., Tregear, A. (2008). ‘Government support to regional food producers: An assessment of England’s Regional Food Strategy’. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 1047-1060. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/c0724r> (ABS List 2010 3*).
5. Tregear, A., Arfini, F., Belletti, G., Marescotti, A. (2007) ‘Regional foods and rural development: The role of product qualification. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23(1), 12-22. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2006.09.010> (ABS List 2010 3*).
6. Davidova, S., Fredriksson, L., Gorton, M., Mishev, P., Petrovici, D. (2012). ‘Subsistence farming, incomes, and agricultural livelihoods in the new member states of the European Union’. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 30(2), 209-227. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/c1195r> (ABS List 2010 3*).

Table of Relevant Grants

	Principal Investigator(s)	Grant Title	Sponsor	Period of Grant	Value to Newcastle
1.	Angela Tregear	Dolphins	European Union (EU)	2000-2003	£18,684
2.	Angela Tregear	Eat the View	Countryside Agency	2001-2002	£43,892
3.	Philip Lowe	Learning from the foot-and-mouth disease crisis	ESRC	2001-2005	£41,197
4.	Matthew Gorton	Evaluation of Regional Food Strategy	DEFRA	2005	£5,715
5.	Angela Tregear / Mitchell Ness	SiNERGI (Strengthening international research on	EU	2005-2008	£10,875

Impact case study (REF3b)

		geographical indications)			
6.	Matthew Gorton	SCARLED (Structural change in agriculture and rural livelihoods)	EU FP6	2007-2009	£72,116
7.	Matthew Gorton	Focus Balkans	EU FP7	2008-2011	£58,085
8	Matthew Gorton	COMPETE (International comparisons of product supply chains in the agro-food sectors)	EU FP7	2012-2015	£240,000

4. Details of the impact

Although the impacts of the research began outside the current REF period, the recommendations in the report to DEFRA on the Regional Food Strategy (RFS) have left a significant and enduring legacy that has continued into the period 2008-2013. This is in spite of a change of government policy and the withdrawal of state financial support for its delivery. Additional impacts have also arisen as a result of recent research with the new EU Member States, thus spreading the reach of the impact beyond the UK.

Implementing recommendations from the evaluation of the RFS

The recommendations of the evaluation were accepted by DEFRA and implemented from 2006 onwards. Additional funding of £2 million was provided to FFB to support a programme of activities (years 2006/7), with the study cited as justification (**IMP1&2**): *“Following an economic evaluation of its Regional Food Strategy, Ministers announced during the year that Defra would continue to support producers of quality regional food and drink through a programme of activities aimed at creating trade development opportunities, raising consumer awareness and improving business competitiveness”* (**IMP2p129**). The study was also cited in parliament by Lord Bach, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for Sustainable Farming and Food, as part of a justification for additional resources to deliver the RFS (**IMP3**).

Continuing the impact in a changed policy environment

Government funding for FFB was withdrawn in July 2008 (and FFB ceased operations in 2009) but support for the sector continued at a regional level, thus continuing to deliver on the recommendations of the evaluation. An important legacy of the RFS remains in the existence of the eight Regional Food Groups (RFGs) (**IMP4&5**) that continue to support the activities of the sector via initiatives such as the development of local food supply chains to supermarkets (**IMP6**).

The Chair of TASTECLUB, the legacy organization of the north east RFG, commented that *“the [Newcastle] research informed the sustainable food and farming policy that led to the establishment of the RFGs”* (**IMP4**). The reach of this impact can be further evidenced by comments from TASTECLUB’s users, such as: *“At last there is an organisation really promoting North East produce!”* and *“I am sure that all of the producer members will benefit from the increasing awareness of local food which is being created by their enthusiastic use of social media and the other marketing endeavours which are being undertaken”* (**IMP4**). Users of other food groups confirmed the efficacy of this approach: *“The food group also introduced me to a contract manufacturing company that can help boost production capacity so that we can fulfil our exciting new listing with Booths supermarkets”* (Food NorthWest) (**IMP5p4**) and *“Taste of the West is a very professional organisation with really good routes to market.”* (**IMP5p7**).

Another important recommendation was that the UK government should take applications for protection of origin for regionally distinctive food products more seriously. Evidence that the revised policy has been effective can be seen in the fact that since the evaluation, the number of applications for protected status in the UK has roughly doubled (**IMP7**) and DEFRA is actively supporting capacity building among producers to make further applications with staff dedicated to this task (**IMP8**). The evaluation was also influential in justifying the inclusion of support to the regional food sector within the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) (2007-2013)

(IMP9), a major programme of support for food, farming and rural development funded by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The RDPE programme document specifically mentions the evaluation and makes clear recommendations for measures to support local value added production in the delivery of the £5bn programme (IMP9).

Extending reach to the New Member States

As part of the FOCUS Balkans project (2008-11), Newcastle has contributed its strengths in consumer research to the analysis of the consumption of regional and other types of foods. Post-project, a Balkan Network for Food Consumer Science has been established, of which Newcastle is a founder member (IMP10). The network brings together academics, policy makers and industry practitioners to stimulate regional and interdisciplinary co-operation and knowledge exchange in the field of consumer science. It thus helps to develop an alternative economic model for food production and marketing that supports the competitiveness of the small farms, which are the bedrock of the rural economy of the Balkans. A representative of Zvijezda, a company specialising in edible oil products, commented *“all the findings that have been presented to us...are useful to us to better understand food consumers and their needs. In this way, we can know how to better respond to those needs and who are the clients we target and what is the way to project our products”* (IMP10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (IMP1) Evidence of support for recommendations of evaluation. Available at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/industry/regional/index.htm> (accessed 19/07/13).
- (IMP2) Evidence from DEFRA Annual Review Departmental Report, 2006, (p.129) that cites the evaluation report and the additional investment to support delivery of the Regional Food Strategy. Available at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/corporate/about/reports/documents/2006deptreport.pdf> (accessed 19/07/13).
- (IMP3) Evaluation as evidence for RFS (Parliamentary debate). Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldhansrd/vo051208/text/51208w04.htm> (accessed 10/09/13).
- (IMP4) Testimonial and business plan evidence from Chair, TASTECLUB
- (IMP5) Case studies from the Regional Food Groups organised as the English Food and Drink Alliance. Available at: <http://www.tastesoutheast.co.uk/upload/Alliance.pdf> (accessed 19/07/13).
- (IMP6) Evidence from Waitrose website on use of Regional Food Groups and their role in facilitating supply from small producers. Available at: [http://www.waitrose.com/home/inspiration/food issues and policies/origin of our food/sourcing british food/regional and local sourcing/do you want to supply waitrose.html](http://www.waitrose.com/home/inspiration/food%20issues%20and%20policies/origin%20of%20our%20food/sourcing%20british%20food/regional%20and%20local%20sourcing/do%20you%20want%20to%20supply%20waitrose.html) (accessed 12/03/13).
- (IMP7) Evidence of increase in PDO and PGI applications, taken from the Database of Origin and Registration (DOOR). Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html;jsessionid=vQMBR1MWn1mnRmhG2LNy8hYRYj1hhsmvwy3Zg2vvdbZvQVpJ8WsNl823015983> (accessed 12/03/13).
- (IMP8) Evidence of support for PDOs and PGIs in recent DEFRA policy: Hansard 6th March 2013. Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130306/text/130306w0002.htm#130306w0002.htm_wqn38 (accessed 12/03/13).
- (IMP9) Evidence of impact on the English Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and mid-term evaluation of the programme, 2010. Available at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/rdpe/progdoc/chapter3.pdf>
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/countries/uk/mte-rep-uk-england_en.pdf (accessed 10/09/13).
- (IMP10) Evidence of impact from the Balkans research: establishment of food policy network, as part of European Framework 7 programme. Available at: http://www.focus-balkans.org/res/files/upload/file/Leaflet_end_final.pdf and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jqxBz-Jsb4> (accessed 03/10/13).